

This is an Official DPHHS HAN Info Service Message

Distributed via the DPHHS Health Alert Network (HAN) System
Wednesday, May 3, 2006 1330 hours (1:30 PM MST)

DPHHS Guidelines for the Control of Suspected or Confirmed Outbreaks of Viral Gastroenteritis (Norovirus) in Long Term Care Facilities

Please be informed that Montana is currently experiencing increased levels of norovirus activity, particularly among residents of long-term care facilities and assisted living centers. Since March 2006, a total of 8 different outbreaks occurring in 5 separate Montana communities have sickened approximately 500 residents and staff. Montana typically incurs an average of seven outbreaks per year in these types of facilities that can be attributed to either a norovirus or another Norwalk-like agent. Although no more outbreaks may occur this year, DPHHS anticipates additional occurrences, and has developed specific guidelines and recommendations for the control of suspected or confirmed outbreaks of viral gastroenteritis (norovirus) in long-term care facilities. The document is attached, and contains guidelines and recommendations in details not currently available in CDC guidance documents. You are encouraged to share this information among your staff, and to forward it proactively to nursing homes and long-term care facilities in your jurisdiction for their benefit. Additionally, local public health authorities may want to consider expanding their active surveillance efforts to include their local long-term care facilities and assisted living centers.

For more information on norovirus in general see

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/submenus/sub_norwalk.htm. Also attached for your information is 1) the CDC Technical Fact Sheet on noroviruses, and 2) the document, "CDC Answers Your Questions About Noroviruses.

For questions regarding the attached guidelines, contact the DPHHS Epidemiology Section at 444-0273.

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The goal Montana's Health Alert Network is to transmit information to local public health authorities as quickly as possible, and assign a suitable priority to the message that is sensitive to the impact of a health-related event providing information of immediate utility relative to the public health and safety of Montanans. For questions or comments relative to Montana's HAN system you may contact the Montana State HAN Coordinator Jim Aspevig at <mailto:jaspevig@mt.gov> or the Associate HAN Coordinator Gerry Wheat at <mailto:gwheat@mt.gov>

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

Info Service Message: provides general information regarding a situation or opportunity; does not typically require immediate action.

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